

LEAD *Educator*

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES SPRING 2002



MISSION STATEMENT

The LEAD *Educator* is a quarterly publication of the Long Beach Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program.

Our goal is to provide news and information about childhood lead poisoning prevention measures for parents, childcare providers and the medical community.

In addition, we provide the latest lead poisoning screening and legislative measures.

NEWS

Warning: Tama Roca candy found to have high lead levels:

On February 23, 2002, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), issued a public warning concerning the consumption of the "Tama Roca" Candy. This Mexican made tamarind fruit candy was found to have lead levels exceeding FDA standards in both the candy wrapper and candy.

In some cases, the candy wrapper lead levels reached 27,700ppm (*parts per million*), while some candy had up to 14ppm exceeding the 600ppm and 0.5ppm FDA standard baseline levels, respectively. Thus far, the DHHS' Food Facility Inspection Program has impounded over 2000 individual candy pieces from 28 markets in the northern and central neighborhoods of the city.

Tamarind fruit candies are very popular with the Hispanic population, especially with children. Adults may unknowingly buy Tama Roca and similar candies for their children and not realize the danger that lead poses to brain development and growth. Lead whether in candy or other sources, is toxic to humans particularly to young children and pregnant women. Therefore, it is very important that proper hand washing and nutrition be part of the daily health practices in the home.

Concerned parents whose children may have consumed these products should ask their doctor for a blood lead test. For additional information on this matter, please call the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, CLPPP at, (562) 570-4203 (English) or (562) 570-4083 (Spanish).



National Public Health Week 2002:

The Department of Health and Human Services will be celebrating National Public Health Week, April 1-5. A series of community outreach events are scheduled for the week. In addition, a Community Forum on Lead and Asthma will take place at St. Mary's Medical Center on Tuesday, April 2, 2002. For information on this event please call (562) 570-4083.

HEALTH EDUCATION

The importance of Nutrition and Hand Washing in reducing lead poisoning in children:

Most lead poisoning is due to old household paint and lead dust from pre-1978 built homes and from "high friction" areas in the home such as windowsills and doors. Lead dust is particularly problematic since children can easily ingest it through hand-to-mouth contact.

Hand-to-mouth and pica (the ingestion of non-food items) behaviors are very common in young children, especially those under six years old. For these reasons, parents should wash their children's hands before every meal and wash everything the child puts in his/ her mouth, such as plastic toys, stuffed animals, and pacifiers.

It is also very important to provide children with nutritious meals. Calcium and iron are important minerals found to slow down lead absorption in the body. Regular meals should include low-fat foods (fruits, vegetables), foods rich in iron (lean meats, beans, spinach, eggs and greens) and foods rich in calcium (milk, yogurt, cheese, tofu and cooked greens).

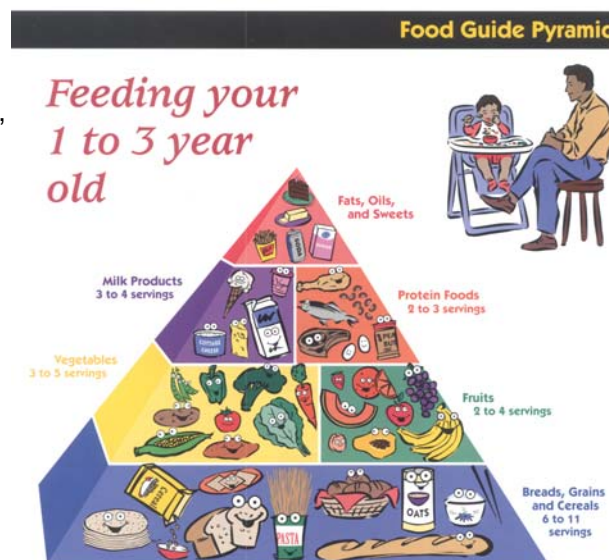
Remember, the only way to know if a child is lead poisoned is through a blood lead test.

Lead and Pregnant Moms:

Expecting mothers can pass harmful lead levels to the unborn child during pregnancy. In the September 2001 issue of the *Journal of the National Medical Association*, a case was presented about a Hispanic woman with a blood lead level (BLL) of 119.4 mg/dL at the time of delivery. A measurement of the newborn's umbilical cord BLL was 113.6 mg/dL. Through later follow-up it was learned that she had exhibited pica behavior during her pregnancy.

This "Maternal-Fetal Exchange" is the result of the mother's current exposure or an early exposure dating back to her own childhood. Lead stored in the mother's bones can be released as the body increases its need for calcium during the pregnancy.

Women can be exposed to lead during home renovation (such as sanding or scraping of paint from pre-1978 built homes) or through an occupational source (automotive repair, home renovation, stain glass soldering etc). It is important that pregnant women speak to their doctor about lead poisoning and possible lead screenings.



Childhood Lead Poisoning Report:

Current Opened Cases under Management:

110

New Lead Cases For 2002:

4

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For additional information please call the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at
(562) 570-4203 or
(562) 570-4083 (Spanish)

For MediCal information please call
1 (800) 832-2307

INFORMATION ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

California Department of Health Services
<http://www.dhs.ca.gov/childlead/>

Alliance to end Childhood Lead Poisoning
<http://aeclp.org>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
<http://epa.gov/opptintr/lead/>

T.D.D. (562) 570-4203

This document is available in an alternative format by request:
(562) 570-4083